

Issues Related To Muslim's Willingness In Organ Donation: Perceived Islamic Prohibition And The Awareness

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Abstract

Many Malaysian citizens are aware that contributing their organs gives “new life” to the people in need. These little “sacrifices” shows indirectly that Malaysians have high values for their country's social development. The largest group of ethnicity in Malaysia is Malays. Sadly this ethnic group appears to be the least to sign up as organ donors. In Islam, the allowable of organ donation was not specifically mentioned in the main reference sources which were Quran and Hadith. This is because organ donation was a modern development of medicine in the world. However, many fatwa had been carried out by Muslim scholars. There are many issues contributing to this scenario, among others perceived Islamic prohibition as well as the awareness among muslims themselves. This paper is to grasps insight of these two issues that affect the muslim's willingness towards organ donation.

Keywords – *organ, tissue, organ donation, transplantation, willingness, awareness, altruism, perceived Islamic prohibition, fatwa*

INTRODUCTION

There are a few studies in Malaysia that proposes the factor of religion-cultural to be the main obstacle to organ donation in Malaysia, while some advocate that the lack of trust of the public towards the medical system as another factor of the unwillingness to donate (Makmor, Abdillah, Raja Noriza, Nurulhuda, Sook-Lu, Soo-Kun, Kok-Peng, 2014). According to Ghannam (n.d.), organ donation seems to be a great controversial deal amongst Muslims, and confronts a few faithful basic beliefs about the human body's sacred and violation prohibited nature.

The Malays face uncertainty whether the religion of Islam permits them to make organ donation or not. Some people do not have the full exposure about the fact that the religion of Islam actually allows the performance of organ transplants for the reason of saving other human lives. At the same time, the level of awareness of this issue was also low which prevents any proper solution or any effort to be put forward in order to encourage organ donation. In addition, talking about this matter, it was not simple to separate the Malay community from their dilemma and traditions. Their difficulty in making choices and their old way of doing things both shows a clear picture of the lack of the Malay community's interest to donate organs. Opinion or perception was classified as tradition (Myths) as the word itself comprises the story or practices of tradition that influences the trust and the provocation to a natural phenomenon (Nazni, et al., 2012).

The transplantation of organs was accepted generally as an approach or an answer to the final stage of a failure in the human's body organ, as investigated by Noordin, Zakaria, et al., (2012). Activities of donating organs may occur either when the donor was still alive or has died, but it was based on their own agreement.

PERCEIVED ISLAMIC PROHIBITION

According to a report from the Ministry of Health Malaysia, Datuk Dr. Hilmi Yahaya as Deputy Health Minister stated that only 266,583 people or 0.9% of the Malaysian population was organ donors from 1975 until September 2014. The number of organ donations for Malays Muslim was made up only 23.38% and still fewer than Chinese and India races although 57% of organ receivers were the Malay Muslims. This shows that many Malay Muslim participants have not encouraging others or still unsure whether organ donation was permissible or prohibit in Islam. According to Wong (2010), some Muslims view that acts as sinful if their organs get transplanted into the body of a non-Muslim. Thus, they were willing to donate organs after death firmly want their organs to be given to the Muslims' receiver only.

The issue has been debated since the 1960s. As a result, a fatwa concerning organ donation was issued in 1970 by the National Fatwa Council. According to Mohamed (2009), fatwa was any religious decision made by mufti (Islamic scholar) who was an interpreter or expounder of Islamic law. In Malaysia, the fatwa was used as reference for matters which relate to organ donation and was adopted by states which do not have a specific fatwa regarding the issues. According to Noor Zurani, Azad Hassan & Norman (2010), the Muslim Council have support the organ donation and transplant which were considered as the charity act in 1970. Based on the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, the majority of Muslim scholars have promoting the importance of saving human life by encourage his followers to seek medical attention when ill. However, this view was no unanimous support by others. There were a few questions asked frequently about organ donation. The first question is, whether organ donation similar to torturing the dead? According to a Hadith, the Prophet SAW said: From `Aisyah R.A.H, she heard the Prophet S.A.W said, "Verily the act of breaking the bones of the deceased is the same as breaking the person's bones while he is alive." (Abu `Abdillah Ahmad ibn Muhammad, 2001). This means that, Islam was very strict in giving respect to the particular dead person, whether they were Muslims or non-Muslims. Therefore, the breaking bones act of the deceased was considered as an act of torturing the deceased as mentioned in the Hadith. Secondly, some might debate that when a person donates their organs, were the organ donors violating the rights and trust given to them in preserving their body's dignity and honor? The answer to the first and second question were that a mankind was the best and the most noble creature created by Allah S.W.T. This has been mentioned in the Quran, Surah al-Isra' (17): 70 interpreted by Yusuf Ali as follow, "We have honored the sons of Adam, provided them with transport on land and sea, given them for sustenance thing good and pure and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of our creation". Hence, we as a Muslim should believe that our body was a gift and a trust from Allah S.W.T. Therefore, we must be careful and perform our rights, both in life and death. Thus, making a decision to donate our organs was part of performing our rights, because according to Hassabullah (1996), the Islam principles were important and who concerns or saves somebody's life is placed very highly in the Quran which known as altruism.

Thirdly, some query whether Muslims can receive any organs from non-Muslims or not. In Islam, there was no limitation to donate organs from non-Muslims to Muslims because the human organs cannot be categorized as Muslim or not. Hence, the organs were tools used by human to perform their religious duties in daily life. This is because a person's faith whether a Muslim or a non-Muslim does not rely on their organs, but their soul. Next, the opposite question of can a Muslims donate their organs to non-Muslims were also being asked. In Malaysia context, the donors cannot recognize who can or cannot receive the organs to be donated after their death. Thus, the issue of whether it was permissible or not to donate organs to non-Muslims does not appear because they should be assisted when they were in need. This matter has explained in Quran, Surah al-Mumtahanah (60): 8 interpreted by Yusuf Ali: "Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them for Allah loveth those who are just." Lastly, some question that the organ donors had been raised on the Judgement Day with the organs that are donated? In Islam, every Muslim believes that the Judgement Day will come. Everything will be destroyed and nothing will escape unharmed including the human body when the Day comes. After that, human will be resurrected in the Hereafter according to their deeds throughout their lives and will be judged by Allah SWT. As faithful Muslims, we believe that everything will be demolished on the Judgment Day and the issue of whether we will be resurrected with or without the donated organs does not arise. The Might of Allah SWT to give life is stated in the Quran, Surah Yasin (36): 79. "Say, He will give them life that who created them for the first time! And for He, is well versed in every kind of creation."

Based on the questions stated earlier, it can be concluded that Islam tolerates and encourages its followers to help other followers although they were a different religion, race, status and wealth whether they were still alive or even after death. Therefore, the altruism character which was a belief or practice of sacrifices and selfless concern for the well-being of other person should be in all Muslims.

AWARENESS TOWARDS ORGAN DONATION

Awareness was when a person has consciousness, recognition or a realization towards something or was informed of current developments. Being aware of any particular information could change a person's behavior and attitudes towards a matter and even raise one's motivation to do something. According to Nazni et al. (2012), awareness was related to the knowledge of a person. He states that a person was able to respond properly towards any change, renewal or circumstances that were happening around them if they were armed with knowledge available to them. Other than that, with awareness, a person can change their decision or their aspiration to do something including organ donation. Meanwhile, Gupta, Jain, Jain, & Gupta (2009), states that knowledge was a major step in raising awareness among the society. This statement showed that the knowledge a person have about something been important to rise and individual's awareness. This shows that, it was important for people in all walks of life to be equipped with knowledge about organ donation so that everyone could be aware of this matter and take action to fighting the issue of insufficient organ donors.

There were many issues regarding organ donation awareness in all over the world. The researchers were examining this issue starting from the year 2010 up until this year (2014). Firstly, Wong (2010), mentioned that the level awareness of organ donation still lacking at Malaysia. Back in the year 2010, even if there was an increase of organ donation rate, the percentage of organ donation was still at a low level compared to other countries such as in the United Kingdom, Canada, United States of America and others. This was said to be due to the reason of low awareness because of insufficient information on organ donation and lack of trust towards the medical system stated Makmor et al, (2014). For instance in the United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia, the number of organ donation has risen from year to year (Lwin, Phau and Lim, 2013). This showed that the level of awareness in Malaysia and other countries differ greatly in a negative manner. On the 31st of July 2010, a report by the National Transplant Resource Center showed that in Malaysia, there were 145,293 organ donors who were enrolled. From this total, 84,325 (58.0%) are the Chinese people and followed by Indians 34,423 (23.7%), a total of 22,476 Malays (15.4%), other races in this country 4004 (2.8%) and the rest are unknown people. The number of organ donors among the Malays was still low even though current trends show an increase from year to year. In as short, it could be seen that Malaysia still has a lower rate in the number of organ donor compared to countries like Spain (34.13%), the United States (26.27%), the United Kingdom (14.70%), and Australia (12.10%).

The researchers had taken a look on the awareness issue in the year 2012 now. Makmor et al. (2014), also states that Malaysia has one of the lowest deceased organs donation rates where the organ donation rate was 0.48 donations per million populations. In the year 2012, after Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye, the Ministry of Health's Organ Donation Awareness Promotion Action Committee's Chairman revealed the result of the Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai's findings regarding the state of patients on the waiting list for organ transplants where he found that the number of Malaysians requiring dialysis treatment due to kidney failure had increased from 7,837 in 2001 to 22,932 in 2010, Lee said that, based on the statistics from National Transplant Resource, it had showed that the organ donation pledgers' number, and awareness level is increasing. "Yet, the number of pledgers is only about 0.6 per million populations compared to Spain with 35 per million population and 5 per million populations in Singapore." From the available data from then until 2012, the amount of organ pledgers was 190,041 since the starting of the campaign in 1997. For only Sabah, the registered donor of organs' number of pledgers was 3,151 since 1997 which amounted only 1.66 per cent of the represented total amount of pledgers. Lee stressed out that, the essential thing was to continuously distribute precise information to increase public awareness and motivate all races of the public to become organ donors.

Moving on to the issue of awareness in 2013, the health Ministry launched the "www.dermaorgan.gov.my" website in this year to create better awareness among Malaysians on the significance of pledging their organs for donation upon their demise. Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam, the minister said that up to the 31st of August, 2013, the verified number of those who pledged their organs was still small as only 233,573 people or 0.81 per cent of the population of this country did so. He said that the awareness of the public on organ donation was crucial as the number of patients in Malaysia that were still waiting for organ transplantation was at 16,945 as at the 31st of August that year. During the same time, the quantity of cadaveric tissue (deceased) donors was also lesser at only 432. Overall, the amount of patients requiring

donated organs far outnumbers the donors. "Therefore, the ministry has proposed the Organ Donation Strategic Awareness Plan," he further explained after the initiation of the website at the ministry's headquarters. Dr Subramaniam explained that the awareness campaign through the new media, using the launched website today was amid the steps taken by the ministry under the strategic plan. It would oblige as a one-stop center to collect all information on organ donation. Lastly, regarding the issues of awareness in this year (2014), it was found that from 1976 to January this year (2014), there were only 446 organ donors registered while there are more than 18,000 patients in need for organ transplantation. Tan Sri Lam Thye, the chairman of National Organ Donation Public Awareness Action Committee stated that this was far different from the number of the actual demand for organ transplantation. Malaysian Medical Association President Datuk Dr N.K.S Tharmaseelan stated that the demand for organs exceeded the number of signed up donors not only in Malaysia but also in other parts of the world.

Based on all the findings that had been put forward, it was highly observable that the awareness issue in Malaysia was very critical. Over the years, the awareness of many Malaysians regarding donating their organs was still in a serious state. A study from Ilango, Nandhini, Manikandan, and Prema (2014), stated that lack of donors may be because of the lack of knowledge of many people about the issues of organ donation. Nazni et al (2012) stated that, creating awareness of organ donation to help patients in need is not new. There were many supports from various parties such as the government and non-governmental organizations. In addition, a "National Organ Donation Awareness Week", which began on 11-18 October 2014, the public and private hospitals that takes part in this, holds a lot of awareness events which was run in many places all over Malaysia. Some examples of the events were the organ donation road show, talk and seminar, which were held openly to the public. Thus, it was necessary to support awareness program in other to expose the necessity of organ donation to the public (Wong 2010). Lack of awareness causes people to miss out on the opportunity to sign up as organ donors. Therefore, a nationwide organ donation campaigns and registration outlets across the country are needed to raise awareness and make registration more accessible to the public.

According to Makmor et al., (2013) Malaysians also embark on a public relation drive to raise public awareness of organ donation through several public awareness programs, such as using living donors as role models in campaigns, organizing talk shows to raise public awareness, and having an organ awareness week by organizing sports or events. Through the sharing of knowledge and awareness of the organ donation issue, the feeling of empathy towards patients in the waiting list for organ transplantations could also be raised. Other countries also use awareness programs as the main source to promote organ donation.

CONCLUSION

Compiling many scholars' discussion regarding this issues, it can be concluded that perceived Islamic prohibition and awareness do shape the willingness of muslim supporting organ donation. Islam tolerates and encourages its followers to help other followers although they were a different religion, race, status and wealth whether they were still alive or even after death.

Awareness of a person is a key that can change individual perception, knowledge, attitudes and behavior and also can motivate person to make organ donation.

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